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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3470

UNCLAS STOCKHOLM 000390

SIPDIS

SECSTATE FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/PPD, EUR/NB, EUR/PA, EUR/FO

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Media Reaction - Stockholm ICI Conference

I. On May 29, the independent liberal Stockholm morning daily "Dagens Nyheter" lead editorial, headlined "Iraq in Stockholm:" said:

"Everyone does not share the view that what now happens in Stockholm is important. Those who are critical believe that the U.S. has violated international law and therefore should take on the reconstruction burden. The U.S. certainly should do more, in particular, to receive refugees. It is not fair that Europe is shouldering a greater responsibility for people who are forced to leave Iran than what the U.S. is doing.

"But to put the burden only on the U.S. is short-sighted policy. One can take a dual position - that the invasion was wrong, and also that the international community now has an important role to play in the rebuilding efforts....

"This conference is not to discuss the invasion but rather to look forward. This is also the only reasonable thing - the world has for too long been harping on the same string, whether the U.S. was right or wrong in attacking (Iraq). The wounds that were inflicted by the Bush administration's presumptuous and arrogant approach have only partially healed....

"However, the Iraqi debacle shows that the path forward must be a multilateral one. The ICI conference is a demonstration, among other things, that the U.S. at the end of the day may have to rely on a UN, which the present U.S. President holds in contempt. Several problems likely would have been much less severe if the world organization had been taken seriously from the very beginning."

II. On May 29, the conservative Stockholm morning daily "Svenska Dagbladet" in its lead editorial commented on the Social Democratic opposition efforts to make political capital of the conference. Under the headline "In Upplands Vasby (former Prime Minister Olof Palme's (rhetoric) does not fit in," "SvD" wrote:

"Today the international conference on Iraq begins. Sweden's role is not to incite (opinion) against the U.S. for what happened in the past, but rather to try to contribute to give the Iraqis their future back....

"Although Iraq today has a weak democratic foundation to rely on, it is still a 'failed state' which, despite improvements, neither can guarantee people security nor basic welfare.

"It will take time (for the Iraqis) to succeed, which is not a given. One certainly can have different opinions about what has taken place, but it should be easy to unite over a willingness to give the Iraqis their future back. It is a pity that the Social Democrats instead choose to pick on the coalition government."

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